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C O N F I D E N T I A L NAIROBI 000641

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FOR S, D, P, G, DRL, AND AF A/S FRAZER FROM THE AMBASSADOR

E.O. 12958: DECL: 03/05/2018

TAGS: [PREL](#) [PGOV](#) [KDEM](#) [KE](#)

SUBJECT: KENYA'S POLITICAL ACCORD AND U.S. ENGAGEMENT

REF: A. NAIROBI 601

[1](#)B. NAIROBI 545 AND PREVIOUS

Classified By: Ambassador Michael Ranneberger for reasons 1.4 (b and d)

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[1](#)1. (SBU) Summary. President Kibaki and Raila Odinga have a positive public tone regarding their commitment to implement the coalition agreement. When I met with them separately on March 3 to lay out U.S. plans and to discuss next steps, they were upbeat. Sorting out the disposition of cabinet positions will, however, involve tough bargaining. Both expressed appreciation for the U.S. role in helping to achieve a solution to the crisis. We continue to receive an outpouring of expressions from Kenyans thanking the U.S. U.S. engagement will be critically important to support implementation of the accord in order to sustain Kenya on its democratic path. Septel reports my March 1-2 visit to the Rift Valley to encourage reconciliation efforts. End summary.

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Domestic and Decisive U.S. Pressure Result in Accord  
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[1](#)2. (SBU) The political accord signed between President Kibaki and Raila Odinga late last week has changed the political landscape and restored peace. (Septel will provide a security update.) Although still traumatized by the extent of the violence that transpired during January and February, Kenyans are justifiably proud that they have pulled back from the edge of the abyss and sustained the country on a democratic path. The prevailing mood is of immense relief and a positive focus on the way forward.

[1](#)3. (C) Four factors got the parties to the negotiating table and resulted in a successful outcome. First, the Kenyan people sent clear messages to their leaders that they wanted a political solution to end the violence and return the country to a path of progress. Kenyans' voices were heard through civil society, religious groups, the media, and the private sector. This remarkable democratic spirit placed immense pressure on the political leadership of both sides. Second, international pressure complemented this pressure coming from the Kenyan people, and made clear to both sides that there was no viable alternative other than a political accord. U.S. intervention-- particularly through Assistant

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visit, and her subsequent tough public statement -- was decisive. Third, Kibaki and Odinga are essentially pragmatic politicians who have worked together before. They saw the value of an accord that gives each one some power, rather than letting the country slip into chaos and isolation. Fourth, the negotiations greatly benefited from the skillful and strong hand of Kofi Annan. Annan called me before he departed Kenya to ask that I pass his profound gratitude to the Secretary for her decisive support.

14. (C) The extent of U.S. influence was aptly indicated by none other than Minister of Justice Martha Karua, the hardline leader of the government's negotiating team who repeatedly denounced outside meddling. I met with her early on February 28, before the meeting later that day between Kibaki, Odinga, Annan, and Kikwete that sealed a deal. Karua, who clearly did not know there would be a deal, said that if it were up to her she would have long since ended the negotiations, which she characterized as "tom foolery." At the same time, Karua dropped her normally gruff demeanor and was exceptionally friendly. She confided that she and the Foreign Minister had been upset by the Secretary's tough statement issued just the day before. She said they asked the President what they could say publicly in response. "Say whatever you want," the President responded, "but whatever you do don't get into a quarrel with the Americans." Karua's account rings true in that President Kibaki was deeply impressed by his 2003 reception at the White House and has consistently made clear publicly and privately his great affection for the U.S.

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Kibaki and Odinga Set Positive Tone  
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15. (U) During the signing of the coalition agreement on February 28, Kibaki and Odinga set a positive tone that Kenyans across the political and ethnic spectrum have so far embraced. Noting the great stability that Kenya has enjoyed and the fact that it has been held up as a model, Kikwete referred to what happened as "an historical accident." He emphasized, however, that Kibaki and Odinga must show the commitment necessary to implement the agreement. Quoting the national anthem, Odinga urged unity. He heaped generous praise on Kibaki, saying that without his intervention the accord would not have been reached. The accord, he said, opens a new era for Kenya to shift from confrontation towards cooperation. "The monster of ethnicity must be destroyed," Odinga stressed. Kibaki acknowledged that the election had been divisive, but commented that the negotiation process "reminded us all that there is more that unites than divides us." He gave his "solemn commitment" to implement the accord in order to strengthen social cohesion and foster prosperity. Echoing Odinga, Kibaki said that the problem of "negative ethnicity" must be addressed. "Let us join hands to embark on this important journey," he concluded.

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Kibaki and Odinga Upbeat on Implementation  
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16. (C) I met separately with Kibaki and Odinga on March 3 to discuss the way forward. I conveyed to both the congratulations of the Secretary and President. I laid out U.S. plans to move ahead on the full range of bilateral programs, including new initiatives like a planned U.S. naval ship visit to Mombasa in April. In this context, I discussed the U.S. commitment of 25 million dollars in additional support, and indicated it would be used to focus on dialogue/reconciliation; support for return of the displaced to their homes and resumption of their livelihoods, as well as related infrastructure and youth agenda programs; support for implementation of the coalition accord, particularly carrying through with the reform agenda; and support for key governance programs, including strengthening the Parliament

and assisting as appropriate the new office of the Prime Minister. I made clear that we would consult closely with the coalition government before moving ahead. I also discussed U.S. intentions to help mobilize other countries and international financial institutions to provide necessary support. I explored with Kibaki and Odinga their plans to move forward and urged them to undertake joint missions throughout the country to sell the accord.

¶7. (C) Kibaki and Odinga welcomed all of this. They both emphasized their view that U.S. support was crucial to achieve the accord, and will be equally important to help make it work. Kibaki stressed the importance of returning displaced Kenyans to their farms very quickly in view of the need to plant before the impending rainy season begins (likely in mid to late March). I agreed on the need to return the displaced to their homes, but made clear that this must be done in a way that ensures their safety. Kibaki said that he will work with Odinga to push through Parliament the legislation necessary to legalize the coalition government. (Parliament will open on March 6 and is expected to review and approve the legislation next week.) Kibaki said that, following passage of the legislation, he and Odinga will visit key parts of the country to sell the accord. He said that gaining acceptance of the accord in the Rift Valley (which was the epicenter of violence) is key to making it work. The President also emphasized the budget shortfalls the country is facing given the negative impact the violence had on the economy. He said he would welcome World Bank and IMF assistance, as well as support from key countries. When I told the President I would be seeing Odinga later in the day, the President said to tell Odinga that "I look forward to working with him."

¶8. (C) When I saw Odinga I reviewed my meeting with Kibaki. Odinga was equally upbeat that the accord will be implemented successfully. Odinga told me in confidence that he would likely name Musalia Mudavadi (his vice presidential running mate) as a deputy prime minister. Odinga indicated he would see the President on March 4 to begin planning for the transition to the coalition government. While he has made no decisions regarding ministerial portfolios, he has divided the ministries into several baskets (defense, foreign affairs, security, finance; infrastructure-related ministries; social service ministries) with the idea that there should be a 50/50 division within each basket. He expects tough bargaining over the disposition of ministries. Odinga stressed his desire to use the Prime Minister's office to make the government run efficiently, in part by establishing a cabinet sub-committee system. Moving ahead quickly with the reform agenda is key, he said. He also feels a national reconciliation conference is necessary to highlight the issue and to reinforce efforts at the grassroots level.

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U.S. Engagement  
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¶9. (SBU) Since the signing of the accord, there has been an outpouring of appreciation from the Kenyan people for the role the U.S. played. We are receiving messages in person from people on the street, through SMS and e-mail, through letters from individuals and organizations, and through media commentary. The U.S. is seen as having played a decisive role in getting both sides to work out a solution. This will further strengthen our already substantial leverage with both sides (and their new coalition government) and with all elements of Kenyan society to keep the process on track. That the Kenyan crisis was solved so quickly in a way that sustains the country on a democratic path is in itself a positive model.

¶10. (SBU) The crisis that Kenya experienced does not mean that the enormous positive progress we and others touted about the country was a chimera. The relative stability that Kenya has experienced and the democratic progress of the past five years are real. The fact that Kenyans could work out )

with help from their friends -- a solution to a profound crisis testifies to the fact that this country has very significant underlying strengths. The crisis did, however, highlight the underlying grievances that have festered since well before independence (particularly with respect to land issues). The crisis does, therefore, provide an historic opportunity for Kenyans to build on their strengths and to fortify institutions and the fabric of their society through institutional reforms that address these grievances.

¶11. (SBU) I also highlighted U.S. engagement during a March 1-2 visit to three places in Rift Valley that had been heavily affected by violence. Septel will report on the trip, which included remarks made to several thousand displaced Kikuyus at an IDP camp and, later the same day, at a reconciliation-building prayer meeting with thousands of Kalenjins, not more than a mile from the displaced persons camp. I laid out what we are doing, talked about the American experience in dealing with domestic racial and ethnic crises, and urged reconciliation. The remarks and trip received extensive media coverage.

¶12. (SBU) Kenyans will continue to look to the U.S. as their most important friend and partner. We are moving quickly to shape policy and programs to support implementation of the accord and the reform agenda. We need to maintain the strong support we had been providing before the crisis. The additional humanitarian assistance we provided in response to the crisis has been greatly appreciated. Septel will convey our plans for the \$25 million in additional funding that the U.S. has announced. We will work closely with Kibaki, Odinga, and their teams to help promote success of the coalition government in a way that benefits our interests and those of the Kenyan people.

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